

NEWSLETTER OF THE FREE THE FIVE DEFENSE GROUP



STATEMENT TO THE PEOPLE

Although we will be engaging in a legalistic struggle in the courts to attempt to defend ourselves from "legal persecution" by the State, we do not believe for one minute that the falsely named Justice System ever provides any accused with anything approaching a "fair trial". It is a myth that fair trials, justice or democracy exist in a bourgeois state. They do not!

The Justice System is one sector of the Canadian State apparatus which, in its entirety, is thoroughly corrupt & unjust. By conscious design, through calculated command, & paralysed under the accumulated weight of centuries of reactionary values & biases, the state apparatus functions to maintain & enforce the capitalist status quo. Its institutions of bourgeois domination perpetuate male supremacy, white supremacy, & class exploitation. Given this reality, it is obviously not possible for true fairness or justice to be practiced in the ruling classes' courts.

Consistently, it is always people of colour, women who demand payment for the sexist relations in which they are trapped, poor or working class white people, & people in resistance who crowd the courts & prisons while the real criminals (corporate rulers, government leaders, militarists, pornographers, & polluters) remain at large continuing to rob, plunder, terrorize & murder at will. And then they want to bring us to "justice"-it is outrageous!

We know that if there was such a thing as fair trials & justice - we would walk free. But there is no justice & we will not receive a fair trial. Yet, because it is sometimes possible to exploit the contradictions inherent in the bourgeois democratic legal process (which result from the need for the lawmakers to appear fair & legitimate), we will be participating in the courtroom facade to try to minimize the legal attack against us.

But justice, like freedom, can only be obtained through the struggle of the people; and until we win, justice will only be an ideal & an inspiration in the hearts of the oppressed.

March 13/83-Julie Belmas, Ann Hansen, Gerry Hannah, Doug Stewart, Brent Taylor

UPDATE

A bail hearing for the 5 was held over two days, Feb. 21 & Mar. 1. The defense counsel gave strong submissions on the right of the 5 to be granted bail. In fact, there was every reason to give them bail, but the judge returned with a denial & a long prepared "pre-judgement". He talked about "public safety" & "upholding the laws of a free & democratic society" but we ask what public & what free & democratic society he is referring to. Since when have the courts ever cared about the safety & rights of us -- the common people? There will be a bail appeal on that decision to be taken to the Supreme Court in April.

A date has been set for a preliminary hearing of the Crown's evidence in the case - Monday, May 2. Because the threat of Direct Indictment is being held over their heads, the 5 have been forced to accept a shortened version/one month of the normal preliminary hearing procedure. This was only agreed to by the 5 on the understanding that the Crown had agreed before a judge to give "full disclosure" on all particulars (witness lists etc.) The only part held back by the Crown is the audio tapes, that will not be played in court in order to shorten the length of the preliminary.

A Direct Indictment has been used very very rarely in B.C., and is an order issued by the Attorney-General's office to take an accused directly to trial & disallowing them the usual right to a preliminary hearing of evidence. The threat of being directly indicted was held over their heads also around their right to 8 day remand hearings. So, they have had to forgoe that right also in order to avoid the more worse situation of a Direct Indictment.

There has been an alarming & unusual change in the case. The Crown has separated the 17 charges & will proceed with four separate trials, & will ask for life sentences for the five. That means four different judges, four separate jury selections. It appears that it is the Crown's strategy to separate the "political" charges from the "criminal" charges & hope that this would wipe out the strength that comes from community support. This is how they try to depoliticize our activities & attempt to diffuse our protest. The community in Vancouver has shown strong support & the prosecutor is concerned that it would affect his success in the courtroom. He wants to see them put away for life & will use every dirty trick to accomplish it. We must stay alert & not be fooled by their tricks - it is a political battle! This separating of charges never happens - until now. And, no doubt, we will see many more aberrations as this case proceeds to trial. The lawyers will work to prevent the separating of charges & we all must refuse to be part of the system's "strategy".

There have been 3 bomb threats received at Oakalla Prison in the last month & at public buildings here & in Toronto. This has greatly messed with the lawyer's visits for the 5; visits of all prisoners; & made security that much tighter since the institution assumed the threats are connected to these 5. A dangerous situation is created since the prisons are no longer evacuated. If this is someone's misguided effort at support, we don't appreciate such disrespect. So, it has to stop.



ILLUSIONS EXPOSED

- Feb. 16, 4 homes of supporters simultaneously raided by the combined forces of Van. Police Dept., R.C.M.P., & Co-ordinated Law Enforcement Unit. 12 women, feminists, suffered this harassment & invasion of privacy. All efforts to interrogate the women were useless because they knew their rights & refused to answer. Typewriters & personal files & address books were seized.
- Several progressive journalists have been followed, pulled over for I.D. checks & generally intimidated by police in the last month.
- Calgary & Edmonton community activists have been harassed & questioned by police in connection with the depositing of leaflets in newspaper circulation boxes satirizing the biased media coverage. The police consider that to be criminal vandalism!?
- Individuals from public anti-rape organizations have been visited by police in an attempt to question & intimidate them.



Many people don't know these individuals or what has been happening to them, but there are many of us who do. We would like to somehow strike a spark of recognition in all of us that their fate is ours too. We are not separate. Many of us concentrate our work primarily on one issue but we have all learned that this work is not isolated from everything else that goes on around us. Our work is necessary because we are living in a society, worldwide, that is ruled by greed & violence. And its ugliness affects us in every way - it breeds violence against women, race hatred, industrial & technological decay, exploitation of the earth that feeds us, slavery & prisons, drug & psychological torture, alienation, apathy & hatred of anything that does not conform to the norm. The list is endless. There is lots of injustice & lots of struggle - it makes the heart ache.

These 5 people in jail now have been involved with the women's movement, environmental issues, native rights, prisoners rights, Third World support, workplace conditions - concerns fundamental to human dignity. Some of the charges they are facing are connected with work that many of us have been involved in for a long time, such as protesting pornography & nuclear insanity. This time can be used to continue raising these issues. We believe that these arrests & the atmosphere the State has created around them, tell us that the State does not want to see pornography or nuclear development stopped. They slam down against our dissent with what is commonly called the iron fist & the velvet glove. They attempt to control our work subtly but when we reach their tolerance level, they use every strongarm repressive tactic. They intend to make a strong example in this case that resistance will not be tolerated. The law is set up to railroad them & lock them away for life. A whole lifetime! We are convinced that the only thing that will get them free is our power. We are the testing ground in Canada right now for the right to be politically active without harassment.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

People's response to the arrests & the continuing repression of activity has been completely uplifting. We are learning much from this case about the forces against us & many have been showing their support already. Feminists; environmentalists; community activists, journalists & lawyers who are committed to the defense of civil liberties; radical youth. At this point, there is a need for our work to reach out more clearly to environmentalists, since there is an alarming trend for that community to disconnect themselves from this defense work. We need to bridge that gap in understanding & unity. International pressure must be generated in order to break the police intelligence force's efforts toward the isolation & depoliticization of the events surrounding the case. To all of you, known or unknown, who have been so generous with your donations to the defense fund - we thank you greatly. OPEN ROAD, SPRING '83 & KINESIS, APRIL '83 both have articles & interviews from the 5, so if you want further info ...

TO CONTRIBUTE SUPPORT...

*RALLY--"UNITY IN PROTEST" (let's raise all our voices for our diverse SAT. APRIL 30, VANCOUVER concerns)
stay tuned for location & time (eg. 1:00 p.m. downtown)

*WRITE LETTERS to any of the 5 incarcerated: Julie Belmas, Ann Hansen, Gerry Hannah, Doug Stewart, Brent Taylor at:
Oakalla Prison
Drawer "O"
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 3N4

TORONTO
- P.O.B. 6326
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*FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS to the defense work can be sent to
FREE THE VANCOUVER FIVE DEFENSE GROUP
Account #91740-1
c/o CCEC Credit Union
205 E. 6th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V5T 1J7

*ANY OTHER IDEAS/INFO to share, contact us at:
Free the Vancouver Five Defense Group
P.O. Box 48926, Bentall Station
Vancouver, B.C. V7X 1A1



*INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE: we are asking people in the U.S. & overseas, to write letters to the nearest Canadian Embassy or Consulate, protesting the abuse of civil rights of the 5 and the repressive tactics used against the community by the police. Send a copy of any letters to the defense group (address above).

